

VOCATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATION OF BUSINESS SUBJECTS' STUDENT CLUBS IN BOTSWANA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Gosaitse Ezekiel Solomon

Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education
University of Botswana
Gosaitse.solomon@mopipi.ub.bw

Burman Musa Sithole

Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education
University of Botswana
sitholeb@mopipi.ub.bw

Abstract

This paper examines the usefulness of business subjects' student clubs. It shows that Botswana secondary education system fails to take advantage of possible educational benefits of such programs. Policy documents provide very little information on subject clubs on their composition and how they should be effectively operated. The paper also identifies some of the benefits of clubs accrued towards learners which include increased academic engagement, civic, engagement, career self-efficacy and employability skills. Teachers also benefit in that they get opportunities to build rapport with learners in a less formal environment that rewards effort without punishing mistakes. They also get opportunity to learn new topic, network with other professionals and have access to more resources that can enrich their business classrooms. Furthermore, the paper invokes Astin's theory of involvement, recommending its use in the operation of business clubs in a way that harnesses their potential benefits.

Keywords

Astin's theory of involvement, Business Education, Business subjects' student clubs, vocationalisation, vocational education.

Introduction

Vocational student clubs have been a part of vocational education for a very long time. In the United States of America, the recorded history of vocational student clubs dates as far back as over nine decades (Alfred et al, 2007). They form a part of instructional programs and activities in vocational education from secondary education level, university and adult education (Threeton, Ewing & Clark, 2010). These clubs attract more 1.5 million student members in a variety of vocational education areas (such as business, marketing, agriculture and health), and provide them with experiences in competitive events, leadership development, professional development and community service (Gordon 2003; Alfred et al 2007). Aragon, Alfred and Hansen, (2013) observe that these four types of experiences are positively related to psychological outcomes and achievement outcomes for member students. Psychological outcomes consist of academic engagement, academic motivation, and civic responsibility while achievement outcomes entail career self-efficacy, grades, employability skills and educational aspirations.

Vocational clubs at secondary education have been found to be related to student performance or grades among secondary school students, higher academic engagement and motivation (Camp, 1990; Aragon, Alfred & Hansen, 2013). They provide contextual learning opportunities for learning by bringing the link between theory taught in class and practice in the real world, consequently contributing to the relevance of classroom instruction. Students who participate in vocational clubs are able to develop employability skills and more confidence in their career choices as a result of the hands-on learning experiences that increase their learning. They also learn interpersonal skills, problem solving and critical thinking which requisite skills for 21st century graduates.

Unlike the countries like the USA that have a more developed vocational education and vocational education clubs at secondary level, Botswana's education system is still infantile in this respect. The Revised National Policy on Education of 1994 which gave birth to the introduction of practical or vocational subjects at both junior and senior secondary level called for the establishment of subject clubs to strengthen the vocationalisation of the curriculum at this level (Republic of Botswana, 1994). However, there is seems to be close to nothing recorded on the running and effectiveness of this clubs. This paper assumes a meta analytic approach to student clubs in vocational subject areas, with specific focus to business education. It aims to find out the value of student clubs in the teaching and learning in business subjects and also to find and suggest ways in which the current system can be improved for better outcomes in the teaching learning process through review of literature.

Background

The history of business subjects in Botswana is fairly young. Their introduction in the secondary education curriculum, together with other vocational or practical subjects, was influenced by the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of 1994. This policy document advocated for the pre-vocational preparation of learners through such measures as ensuring academic subjects are vocationalised and increasing the number of subjects that fall in the category of vocational subjects at this level (Republic of Botswana, 1994). Thus Business Studies at junior secondary education level, consisting of Commerce and Accounting and Commerce and Office Procedures were introduced in 1998. At senior secondary education level, subjects such as Commerce and Business Studies were introduced in 1999 (Weeks, 2002). Pursuant to the goal of pre-vocational orientation of the secondary school curriculum, the Second National Commission on Education of 1993 and 1994, and the resultant Revised National Policy on Education of 1994 further recommended that the creation of practical subjects' clubs and other clubs which would provide a bridge between the classroom and industry should be encouraged (Republic of Botswana, 1994; Weeks 2002).

What is vocational education, vocationalisation and why vocationalize?

According to Chukwudi and Chukwudi (2015) vocational education refers to a form of education that cultivates development of values alongside skill learning among learners. A much more traditional understanding of vocational education refers to a programme of study that prepares learners for the world of work or specific trades. Increasingly, in the United States of America literature, vocational education is called *career and technical education*. Castellano, Stringfield and Stone (2003) observe that vocational education was facing a decline because it was not evolving with the times in terms of integration of technological skills in many trades, and the perception that it was for students not intending to pursue further education beyond high school. Due to the negative stigma associated with vocational education in

the United States, in 1998, the American Vocational Association adopted the term *career and technical education* for vocational education (National Business Education Association [NBEA], 2008).

The name change reflected a shift from the narrow curriculum of trying to fit young people for specific jobs to a much broader perspective of preparing students for either entering the job market after secondary school education or pursuing further education (Castellano, Stringfield & Stone, 2003). It also required integration of academic and vocational curriculum to prepare secondary school graduates for the demanding 21st century world of work rather than narrow job occupations (*ibid*). Such reforms aligned well with Dewey who called for the eradication of dualism between general education and vocational education. According to DeFalco (2016) Dewey envisioned a type of vocational education that does not merely fit the youth for existing jobs, but for what he termed *industrial intelligence*. By this he referred to an education that allows young people to be masters of their own destiny, equipped to make choices of where they would fit in the chain of production as either employees or employers, as far as it lies within their ability and intellectual capacity. Such an education would equip learners with hands-on skills, problem solving, innovation and creativity skills. This conceptualization of vocationalised education system is diametrically opposed to the *social efficiency theory* by Snodden and Prosner, which basically tried to fit students for the existing job to perpetuate the status quo within society. This type of education did not allow those who possessed it much social mobility, but became tools of industry subservient to the social elite, without any possibility of questioning the system or pulling themselves up.

Botswana has always avoided a purely vocational curriculum at secondary level but leaned towards a more academic curriculum. Thus the reforms directed towards vocationalisation of the curriculum, called for an increase in the number of practical subjects to add to the existing academic subjects (Republic of Botswana, 1994). According to Luaglo (2002) a school-based vocational education and training differs with a vocationalised curriculum. The author argues that the former places more emphasis on teaching practical skills and a theory aspect that is directed toward those skills whereas the latter is dominated by general or academic subjects with a few practical subjects. Furthermore, Mudariki and Weeks, (1995, quoted in Weeks 2002, p.105) posit that in addition to infusion between academic subjects and practical subjects, vocationalisation could include “learning through clubs and societies”. Vocationalisation was pursued in Botswana as a more pragmatic approach because many countries that emphasized vocational education and training at secondary school level failed dismally. Also, the costs of running a purely vocational education system are prohibitive since it demands expensive human and capital resources.

The over-emphasis on an academic curriculum has had a fair share of criticism. Tabulawa (2013) observes that since independence Botswana’s education pursued a utilitarian perspective whereby the driving force behind education was for the learner to acquire a certificate so that they could get opportunity to further their education or get a job. The emphasis was so much on passing examinations which would then be a license to attaining a job or social mobility. This resulted in what has been termed the *diploma disease*, a concept that describes a situation where frustrated unemployed graduates saturate the job markets (Tabulawa, 2013; Jotia & Sithole, 2016). Without doubt, such an education was led by an immensely teacher driven pedagogy akin to what Freire (1993) has termed the “banking” concept of education. A type of education that saw learners as mere assimilators of knowledge imparted by the knowledgeable teacher, and regurgitation of such knowledge as a demonstration of learning. Freire (1993) aptly characterizes instruction in classrooms of this type of education system in this manner:

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to “fill” the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity (p. 71).

The sad reality is that this type of education system did not lead to empowerment of those who possessed it to look beyond getting employed but self-reliance and self-employment.

Unfortunately teacher centered pedagogy is still prevalent in many classrooms, including business education classrooms in Botswana (Sithole, 2010). This is corroborated by the World Bank Group (2017) whose study found that pedagogy in Botswana classrooms does not do enough to equip students with 21st century skills such as teamwork, collaboration, active learning and critical thinking. This is regardless of the recommendations of curriculum planners for the use of more constructivist and action-oriented teaching methods that would help students to bridge the gap between theory and practice or world of work (Republic of Botswana, 2008). Examples such as project and problem-based learning, excursions to business enterprises, simulations, case studies, cooperative and collaborative activities, and class presentations. Business subjects’ clubs could be another practical approach of supplementing classroom instruction in line with the recommended teaching approaches. However, there seems to be a dearth in academic literature about their contribution to learning business subjects. This is notwithstanding the fact that business subjects’ students participate in these clubs and even compete as schools from regional level to national level.

Why a Focus on Business Subjects Clubs?

Student clubs or organizations have always been a part of Business Education for a very long time. In fact, areas such as entrepreneurship education in the United States of America evolved through engaging students in students’ clubs or Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), as they are commonly called in the USA academic literature (Nelson, 1981). Furthermore, there is evidence that in the USA student clubs have always been a part of vocational education for over a century now, dating far back to passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 (Alfred et al, 2007). Some of the business subjects related student clubs include they have include: Business Professionals of America, Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), Future Business Leaders of America, Business Professionals of America (Gordon 2008; NBEA 2008) and Junior Achievement which has a strong focus on entrepreneurship and found in many parts of the world including Botswana. As noted with Junior Achievement, each club has some area of focus relating somewhat to business courses. For example, DECA focuses on development on marketing and management skills of its member participants and BPA focuses on developing leadership skills and competencies in business and office related occupations. Alfred et al (2007) posit that student clubs in vocational areas have over the years contributed to the development of various activities “such as skills contests, community service, and leadership development—to improve the members’ leadership skills, career and technical knowledge and skills, personal characteristics, and employability skills” (p.2).

Surprisingly, their operation, value and importance to business subjects have not been examined in the academic literature, in Botswana. Their mention in policy documents like the Revised National Policy on Education of 1994, without specificity to business subjects, but all practical subjects, is very

brief and miniscule. In fact, Weeks (2002) in studying pre-vocationalisation of secondary schools in Botswana found that most schools did not have any running practical subject clubs. The reason for their absence is that teachers of practical subjects lamented that they were too busy and overworked, and consequently had no time for clubs (Weeks, 2002). There is therefore a need to interrogate their role in education, how they are operated and whether there is any educational value or otherwise in their running, especially for Business Education in Botswana.

Different secondary schools have business subjects' clubs which are but a shadow of their true potential. These clubs often participate in subject fairs or competitions at regional level and national level on such areas as business plan competitions, problem solving competitions or questions relating to business concepts among others. The competitions are often in separate business subjects such as Accounting, Business Studies and Commerce. Typically, teachers in schools select the best students in their schools and prepare them for a few weeks to compete at regional level, and if they do well at this stage, they proceed to the national level. Immediately after the fairs, the club would be dormant until the following year. In other words, business subjects' clubs seem to only exist for competitions and not to complement classroom instruction.

Problems and missed opportunities in the current system of operating subject clubs

Membership and operation: The first problem with the running of business subject clubs starts with membership. The fact that they only pick the best crop of students who are likely to fare well in competitions and win a prize for the school is problematic. It means they are an exclusive club of the chosen few. Opportunities are missed for the majority of learners who may be average and struggling academically in the subjects for contextualized learning. The benefits derived from involvement are enjoyed by those already doing well.

Poor grades in Business Subjects: Business subjects are among the subjects with very high failure rate especially at junior secondary school level. For example, in the last five years students who obtained grade C or better in Commerce and Office Procedures dropped from 14% in 2012 to 5.23% in 2017 and from 28.6% to 17.59% in Accounting for the same period (Botswana Examinations Council, 2018). Many of the struggling students find business concepts too abstract would possibly gain meaningfully in club activities as they would get to apply concepts they learned in class.

According to Pittaway et al (2010) clubs offer learners opportunities for experiential learning as they involve them in a wide range of activities that demand an action-oriented approach. Thus business subjects student clubs operated with the right prevocational orientation, provide learners with opportunities to see the relevance of concepts they are taught in the business classroom. They see how these concepts could be applied to the real world. Business student clubs “allow students to apply learning, as well as offer programs and activities that help students reinforce what they learned in the classroom” (National Business Education Association, 2013). As such, participating in activities like school stores would give learners opportunity to be more hands-on on keeping business records, book-keeping, inventory managements and managing a business among others. All these are not possible in Botswana secondary schools because in many schools because school-stores are run by outsiders who aim at making a profit with no student involvement in the businesses.

Unemployment and low employability skills of secondary education graduates: A case for vocationalisation of secondary education based on the transition rate from junior secondary school to

senior secondary school system, and from secondary education to tertiary education. Recent statistics on the average transition rate from junior secondary to senior secondary education for the years 2003 to 2013 is 61.8%, only reaching the highest of 70.3% in 2004 (Republic of Botswana, 2013). On the other hand, the national transition rates from senior secondary education to tertiary education for the years 2012/2013, 2013/2014, and 2014/2015 are 57.3%, 56.9% and 64.3% respectively. The close to 40% churned out of the system at junior and secondary level would have to find other means to survive.

However, if the education system has failed to equip them with employability skills, they would be resigned to unemployment and poverty. This argument is supported by the World Bank Group (2017) which reports that approximately 34% of out of school youth are unemployed and economically inactive. Furthermore, the report submits that in addition to possessing foundational skills (reading, writing and mathematics), the youth who do not proceed to tertiary education would be more prepared to transition into the world of work if equipped with better vocational skills. Fasih et al (2014) suggest that the high unemployment within this cohort could be resulting from an education system that fails to equip secondary graduates with higher order skills required by a knowledge-based economy.

Literature Review

The study of literature of student organizations or clubs in Business Education can be premised in the understanding that clubs or student organizations fall under the ambit of extracurricular activities. However, in the academic literature, the terms extracurricular activities and core curricular activities with reference to student clubs, societies or organisations seem to be used interchangeably (Husted, Mason, & Adams, 2003; Pittaway et al., 2010; Nemelka, Nemelka & Gardner, 2012; Smith & Chenoweth, 2015). Nemelka et al (2012) observe that extra-curricular activities have no consistent definition in academic literature. Following an in-depth examination of extra-curricular activities in academic literature, they define extra-curricular activities as voluntary activities that are either academic or non-academic taking place under the authority and backing of an institution of learning but are not graded. Students are expected to participate in them outside classroom time and are not part of the curriculum.

On the contrary, co-curricular activities require learner “participation outside of normal classroom time as a condition for meeting a curricular requirement” (p. 699). The National Business Education Association (2013) argues that although business related clubs are often viewed as extracurricular, they serve a co-curricular purpose. The justification for the appellation of co-curricular activities seems to be based on the fact that student organizations or clubs align with specific vocational subjects and can be integrated into classroom instruction, even though some of their activities extend beyond class time (Husted et al, 2003; Gordon, 2008; NBEA, 2013). Nonetheless, participation in student organizations or clubs is voluntary, occur outside normal classroom time and do not earn a credit or grade, hence also qualifying as extracurricular activities.

Benefits of students’ clubs

Student organisations such as business clubs in schools are extracurricular activities to enhance student learning of business and entrepreneurial competencies (Educate, 2016). After-class clubs are used world-wide to expand student’s horizons through subject-related experiences with their peers. These organisations are vital because they are the ultimate in experiential learning for young people, giving them the leadership and power to make their own decisions and watch how those decisions affect their

life and the lives of others (Foundation of Tomorrow, 2018). In Business Education, student business clubs are student-led but are often supervised by business teacher(s). The clubs normally meet weekly during scheduled extracurricular time to plan and coordinate their activities. Typical activities include debates and discussions on topical business issues, and organisation and participation in business ventures and business-related contests and/or competitions.

The activities of many student clubs are based on the major field of study in a school. For example students taking business subjects and interested in entrepreneurship may want to join organisations like the Commerce Club or Junior Achievement where they will be brought together with students with similar interests and they will participate in programmes and events that will assist in their development as entrepreneurs. The organisations also offer members recreational, social, and cultural opportunities that in the long run will enhance the students' educational experience.

There are a lot of benefits that can be gained by joining a student club, hence they are something worth investing some time in for students' the long-term gains and experience (Steele, 2017). Business Education student clubs provide experiences that inspire young people to realise their potential, to investigate business careers and to assume responsibilities of adult life (National Business Education Association, 2008). These clubs also give students the opportunity to develop their confidence, self-esteem, leadership abilities and spirit of cooperation by participating in competitive activities (Newton, 1992 cited in National Business Education Association, 2008).

According to Mannison (1997), team skills are particularly important in education and the workplace. It has always been the case that employers universally value workers who can work with others (Zimmer, 2018). Teamwork has become an important part of the working culture and many businesses now look at teamwork skills when evaluating a person for employment. This important skill of learning to work within a team can be imparted to students who join student organisations. Steele (2017) is of the view that within student organisations, participating members will be afforded lots of opportunities to work within a team. He says this is an important skill to learn because students will undoubtedly need this skill both in school/college as well as in their careers. They will be placed in situations where they will need to rely on others in their student organisation and others they will rely on them. This is very similar to how many jobs and classes in schools work.

For business education students, they will be able to apply classroom experiences in their student clubs, and also develop leadership and life skills that help them become more effective in classroom team projects. This view is supported by the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (1997) which affirmed its support for career and technical student organisations by asserting that business student organisations serve the co-curricular purpose of projects correlated to classroom instruction while providing opportunities for leadership and personal development, personal responsibility and business skills. Steele (2017) went further to posit that being part of a student organization allows students to put those things they have learnt in class to the test in real-world situations. They will get to learn what works and what doesn't, and also be able to take that knowledge back to the classroom, and then, of course, they could also use the knowledge in their future careers.

The benefits of joining student organisations such as school business clubs were summed up by Reed and da Silva (2007) when they averred that research shows that students who are involved in student organisations activities demonstrate sound problem-solving skills, resolve conflict in a healthy

manner, learn time management techniques, work well as part of a team, and develop organizational skills. Involved students also report higher levels of satisfaction with their college experience.

According to Husted, Mason and Adams (2003) the benefits student organisations are also experienced by teacher coordinators in various ways, thus having the potential to positively affect instruction and classroom learning. They argue that teachers advising student clubs become more familiar with students in an environment that is informal and more peer-centered. Such a climate may help the teacher to understand better students, build relationships that can be tapped during instruction in the business classroom. Students' academic motivation is associated with providing students with interesting yet challenging work in a non-threatening environment that rewards effort without punishing mistakes. Such a nurturing learning environment must also consist of teachers and peers supporting learning and respecting one another (Perry, Turner, & Meyer, 2006 cited in Aragon, Alfred & Hansen, 2013). Thus teacher coordinators can also encourage individual learner motivation and growth as learners compete with peers and their own past performance. Furthermore, the clubs can provide more resources that can enhance and augment classroom instruction e.g. exposure that learners may get from guest speakers, field trips and competitions. Teachers can engage learners in more authentic projects that go beyond the boundaries of the normal lesson, thus making concepts learnt in the business classroom more relevant to learners (NBEA, 2008). Teachers also get opportunities to network with fellow educators and industry experts, and also gain an understanding of new topics, and technologies all which can positively influence their practice.

Theoretical Framework

Applying Astin's Theory of Involvement to Business Subjects Clubs

Astin's theory of involvement has been used to study student involvement with both the academic and social aspects of the curriculum at higher education. It was initially focused on addressing issues of dropouts from college and identifying factors that would lead students to persist with their academics at this level. Over the years, the theory has been applied to studying involvement in academics student organizations and non-academic student organizations and associations ranging from students' political associations to even sports and athletics.

Astin (1985) argues that student involvement plays a paramount role in development, and students develop through engagement in activities. He posits that involvement is a key tenet of an excellent learning environment, in addition to high expectations, and assessment and feedback. He defines student involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy a learner dedicates towards the academic experience. Thus, according to the theory, involvement is evidenced by expending considerable energy to studies, spending lots of time within the school campus, active engagement or participation in student organizations and related activities, and increased interaction with educators and peers. On the contrary, student non-involvement is characterized neglecting school work, shunning participation in extracurricular and/or co-curricular activities, and low interaction with educators and fellow students.

Threeton and Pellock, (2010) have used Astin's theory to examine student participation in competitive events of a vocational club called Skills USA for grade 11 students. They posit that this theory is relevant in this context because vocational education requires the use of vocational clubs for contextual learning purposes to engender learning in authentic experiences that relate to the real world.

This require students to process new learning in line with existing frames lines of reference, hence naturally invoking experiential learning. Hunt (2003) has applied this theory in line with teaching practices that engender deep learning in the classroom. The extension of this theory to secondary education and business subjects' clubs in particular enhances its usefulness to teaching and learning situations, which are not yet fully explored. In fact, Hunt (2003) argues that Astin's theory "is consistent with student centered teaching approaches in that the student plays an integral role in determining her or his own degree of involvement in various educational activities" (p.133). This is in line with encouraged constructivist pedagogies that are realistic, hands on and action-oriented, and capable of engendering 21st century skills such as creativity, innovation, problem solving, communication to prepare learners for the challenges of the modern world of work (Republic of Botswana, 2008; World Bank, 2017).

Application of Student Involvement Theory to Business Subjects Clubs

Based on the potential benefits and identified problems business subjects are faced with Astin's framework seems instructive for business subjects' teachers could use to guide and enhance their approach to running meaningful business subjects' clubs, and ensure that learners derive the greatest possible benefit from the clubs. It provides a well thought out and structure that is supported by research to improve the operation of student clubs to the benefit teaching and learning in business subjects. According to Astin (1999), student involvement theory has five basic postulates: (1) involvement entails investing physical and psychological energy in various objects; (2) involvement is a continuum; (3) it has both quantitative and qualitative features; (4) learning and personal development is proportionate to the quality and quantity in a programme of study; and (5) an effective policy or practice relates to its potential to increase student involvement. These are discussed in the context of what each postulate means and how they may be applied business subjects' clubs at both junior and secondary schools in Botswana.

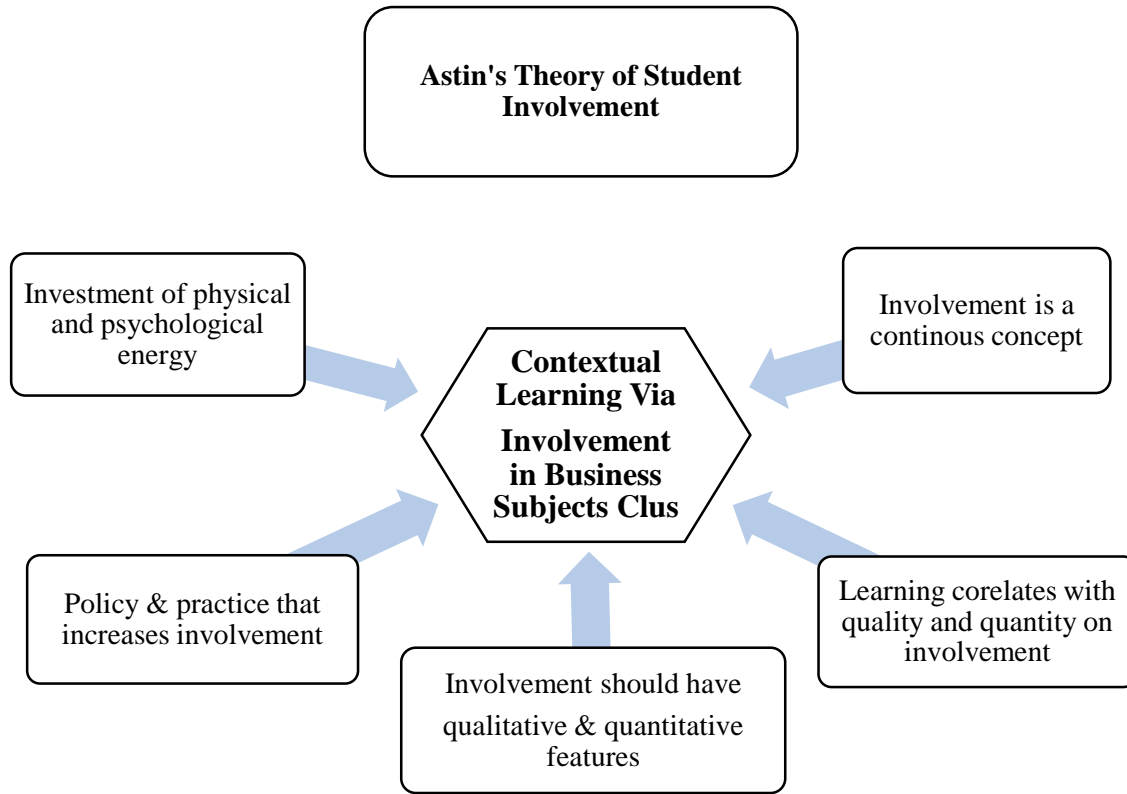


Figure 1: Application of Student Involvement Theory to Business Subject Clubs, adapted from Threeton and Pellock (2010)

Investment of physical and psychological energy: Student involvement is not passive but requires the whole person. Applied to academic organizations or clubs, this means a student has in various activities ranging from the highly generalized to the more specific. Students can work on various activities that give students rich experiences, and also student can assume roles that require them to work on specific projects. For example, student members of the club may be tasked with developing a business plan for the subject fair competitions or prepare to participate in problem solving tests/competition.

Involvement is a continuous concept: Astin (1999) observes that student engagement is not constant as student show different levels of involvement on different tasks at different times. Thus continuity in activities of the club taps on student engagement at its peak and thus maximizes learning. Typically, in Botswana secondary schools subject clubs are resuscitated when teachers prepare students to compete at subject fairs, and at the end of the competitions clubs die out until competitions in the following year. As a result there is no continuity in learning experiences that could complement classroom learning in a more contextualized environment.

Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features: This means involvement can be *measured* by the amount of time that students work on an academic task or assignment related to the student club. The quality and relevance of the activities that students are engaged in are also of paramount importance as they should be geared toward enhancing a learners' attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to business. This implies that teachers should develop activities and projects that will require meaningful

use of time while possessing the quality to engender authentic learning. Even though involvement is positively related to academic achievement, Morreti and Inavona (2017) have found that the depth of student involvement in activities is more correlated with higher achievement than breadth in participation. Which means students should focus on few activities and understand them more deeply for better learning and retention.

Learning and personal development correlate with involvement: In line with the previous postulate, the goal of involvement is learning and personal development. The extent to which students learn and develop is proportionate to the quality and quantity of the programme as a whole. Students who are less involved may fall short in other areas of learning and personal growth compared to students who are involved. Camp, 1990 has found that participation of high school students in extra-curricular activities is positively related to their grades. This is further supported by Alfred et al (2007) who found that participating in clubs at high levels such as competitions has more positive results for individual participants. Their study also found that the more students participated in vocational education clubs, “the higher their academic motivation, academic engagement, grades, career self-efficacy, college aspirations, and employability skills” (p. 29).

Policy and practice that increases involvement: This tenet holds that the effectiveness of policy or practice is directly related to the extent to which it increases involvement. Whereas subject related clubs in vocational subjects are enshrined in the Revised National Policy on Education of 1994 (Republic of Botswana, 1994). The reference to subject clubs is just in a few lines. There seems to be no other policy that details the role of vocational subjects' clubs, their activities and how they are to be operated in detail. The lack of such detail makes it rather difficult first to increase involvement and secondly to hold business subjects' teachers to account for subject clubs. Perhaps policy makers could learn from countries such as the USA with a rich track record of at least 8 vocational education clubs recognized by the USA Department of Education spanning over a period of nine decades (Alfred et al, 2007; Aragon, Alfeld, & Hanse, 2013). Threeton and Pellock (2010) observe that as from early as 1917 the United States has passed several legislative acts that speak to issues relating to vocational education and vocational education clubs. For example, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 allocated funding to secondary school teachers among other things covering costs related to their advisorial roles in student clubs. The George-Barden Act of 1946 specifically mentions these clubs, and a much more recent act, the Carl D. Perkins Improvement Act of 2006 tacitly recognizes the infusion of vocational clubs in vocational education as an invaluable part of vocational education. This means that it is insufficient for policies in Botswana to just mention the need of vocational clubs (of which business subject clubs are classified. The lesson that can be drawn here is that there must be more concrete policies that operationalized implementation of such.

Methodology

This research work is based on the authors observation of carrying practices in secondary schools both at junior and senior levels. The first author has had firsthand teaching experience at both levels of education, and together with the second author have interacted with business subjects teachers as teacher educators. This has allowed both the authors opportunity to observe practices in schools as they relate to business subjects' clubs. Furthermore, the study is a meta-analysis that makes use of literature on student clubs, critics the status quo and draws lessons that can be applied to Botswana contexts to harness the educational benefits of business subjects' clubs.

Discussion

Business subject clubs have great potential to impact students who take business subjects at secondary school level. They have the potential to develop interest and achievement in the subject and influence students to see value in pursuing careers in line with their subjects. This position seems to be supported by Nwankwo & Okoye (2015) who found that science clubs influenced learner interest, achievement and career choices towards the sciences. This position is consistent with other studies which found that students in vocational clubs seem to possess higher academic engagement, civic engagement, career self-efficacy and employability skills than those student taking practical subjects without participation in vocational student organization (Alfred et al., 2007; Aragon, Alfred & Hansen, 2013). The benefits of participation in student clubs does not only benefit learners but also teachers of practical subjects, of which business subjects are a part, helping them to create a classroom environment that is interesting, challenging and allows learning from mistakes and peers (Husted, Mason & Adams, 2003; Aragon, Alfred & Hansen, 2013). Thus it can be deduced from all these that business subjects clubs, if run well, promise great potential for learning and performance in business subjects which are currently underperforming.

Notwithstanding the potential benefits, business subjects' clubs often take an exclusionist approach. Owing to the fact that they seem to only function to compete in subject fairs, and using students who are already doing better in the subjects only. This discriminatory approach means learners who are struggling are left out in the lurch and deprived from enjoying the benefits associated with participating in vocational clubs. Alfred et al. (2007) argue that there is greater benefit in having large numbers of students participate in club activities, not just exceptional ones. They argue that at-risk students and those socio-economically disadvantaged lack the influence of peers possessing high expectations, and as a result would benefit more from positive associations in business subject related clubs. Although McNeal (1995) found that athletics and arts clubs have a stronger effect on curbing drop out than academic and vocational clubs, other studies have found lower dropout rates among students who participate in vocationalised education that include mathematics and science and a certain ratio of academic to vocational subjects (Plank 2001; Stone & Aliaga, 2003). Stone and Aliaga (2003) suggest that concerted efforts on dropout rates should be directed to average and poorly performing students.

In addition, current practices in the running of business subjects' student clubs in Botswana junior and senior secondary schools fall far short from achieving these potential benefits. Many opportunities are missed for contextualized learning, which help students connect classroom instruction with the real world. Threeton and Pellock (2008) lament that many students today have a challenge understanding subject content that is disconnected from the real world. The high failure rate in these subjects especially at lower secondary education level is a testament to the need of changing the status quo and finding more innovative approaches that would complement classroom instruction.

Whereas business subject clubs could assist in rescuing this situation, in their current form do not provide learners with all the types of experiences which are key tenets of vocational student clubs. These have been identified as leadership development, professional development, competitions and community service (Alfred et al, 2007). They only put much emphasis on competitions only. This skewed focus on one area is likely to have a negative bearing on psychological (academic achievement, academic engagement, civic responsibility) and achievement (career self-efficacy, grades, employability skills, educational aspirations) outcomes (Aragon, Alfred & Hansen, 2013). A more deliberate, inclusive and

thoughtful approach that would bring connections between abstract business concepts and authentic contexts, while improving learner engagement and achievement outcomes.

The application of Astin's framework provides a comprehensive and strategic, deliberate approach to reforming the running of business related subject clubs in Botswana secondary schools. First it emphasizes activities that would give learners practical experiences through active engagement. This provides rich experiences that provide opportunities for contextual and experiential learning which are constructivist in nature. The framework also emphasizes the quality and quantity of involvement which calls for careful selection of activities that would result in better learning outcomes. The discontinuous operation squanders teaching and contextual learning opportunities that could have gained if subject clubs did not only focus on drilling students for fairs only without activities throughout the year. This continuous involvement, which the framework proposes, is more likely to spur learning and personal development of learner through improving psychological and achievement outcomes. Last but not least, the framework recognizes that value of policies that support student involvement in club activities. In the USA where vocational clubs are an integral part of vocational education, policies and legislations have made it possible to operate and finance clubs for many decades. A few sentences in Botswana education policy documents possibly communicate the lack of thoughtfulness on the value of educational clubs and also explain why little has not been done to reform and grown vocational subject related clubs.

Recommendations

Based on the current practices in the running of business subject clubs in schools and identified benefits and missed opportunities, the following recommendations are made:

1. The business teacher education should incorporate teaching prospective teachers on the value and effective ways of running student clubs.
2. The running of subject related clubs should be more inclusive, involving students of different abilities so that students who are academically challenged also benefit practical skills that may be used immediately after graduation, and also complement classroom instruction.
3. Business subject clubs should have activities that run continuously throughout the year. It is common to find school stores and tuck shops run by businesses from outside the school, whereas facilities for other vocational subjects are run by students. We recommend that these be made part of business subjects clubs so that students learn practical business skills.
4. Business subject clubs should also include people from industry who can share skills to learners. They should also be part of panels of judges at competitive events or fairs so that they can bring the much need industry experience to learners and educators.
5. A robust policy reform that addresses vocational clubs related to business subjects and other vocational subjects at secondary education level is recommended. With such policies in place, many of the changes that are needed in the operation and funding needs of vocational clubs can be implemented with relative ease.

Conclusion

Business subjects' clubs align well with recommended teaching methods in business subjects which are constructivist, learner centered, hands-on, action-oriented and authentic. Their effective use would augment classroom instruction and learning by helping students to see the relevance of what is learnt in the business classroom in the real world. The authors observe that there are missed opportunities that the education system is overlooking despite the many challenges that face business subjects in terms of poor academic performance and learners who leave secondary education without employability skills. For higher outcomes, structured operation that runs throughout the year, with projects that relate to the classroom content, the use of Astin's Theory of Involvement is encouraged. Educators and administrators must ensure that clubs function according to all the postulates of the theory. Authors further recommend that school stores must be part of business clubs, and operated by students to provide learners with more opportunities for contextualized learning. Membership in this clubs should not only consist of exceptional students, but learners of mixed abilities so that they are not exclusionist and for the benefits to be enjoyed by every learner who wishes to participate, regardless of their abilities. This also will empower students who fail to go to tertiary to develop business skills that they can use in the real world immediately after secondary education, while shaping career prospects of those wishing to pursue business education at higher level.

References

- Alfred, C., Aragon S. R., Hansen, D. M. Zirkle, C., Connors, J., Spindler, M., Romine, R. S. & Woo, H. (2003). *Looking Inside the Black Box: The Value Added by Career and Technical Student Organizations to Students' High School Experience*. St. Paul, MN: National Research Center for Career and Technical Education/University of Minnesota Press.
- Aragon, S. R., Alfred, C. & Hansen, D. M. (2013). Benefits of Career and Technical Student Organizations' on Female and Racial Minority Students' Psychosocial and Achievement Outcomes. *Career and Technical Education Research*, 38(2), 105-124. DOI: 10.5328/cter38.2.105
- Astin, A. W. (1985). Involvement the cornerstone of excellence. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 17(4), 35-39.
- Bartkus, K. R., Nemelka, B., Nemelka, M., & Gardner, P. (2012). Clarifying the Meaning of Extracurricular Activity: A Literature Review of Definitions. *American Journal of Business Education*, 5(6), 693-704.
- Camp, W. (1990). Participation in Student Activities and Achievement: A Covariance Structural Analysis. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 83(5), 272-278. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27540397>
- Castellano, M., Stringfield, S. & Stone, J. R., (2003). Secondary Career and Technical Education and comprehensive reform: Implications for research and practice. *Review of educational Research*, 73 (2) 231-272.
- Chukwudi N. J. & Chukwudi N. F., (2015). Towards more effective vocationalisation of Business Education in Universities in South East of Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(25) 41-48.
- DeFalco, A., (2016). Dewey and Vocational Education: Still Timely? *The Journal of School & Society* 3(1) 54-64.
- Educate (2016). Student business club. Retrieved from: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/520111afe4b0748af59ffc18/t/582e222a5016e1e2d5cf02b2/1479418431943/2016_CLUB_GUIDE
- Fasih, T., Ballal, S., Macdonald, K., Mbaya, L., Mupimpila, C., Okurut, N., Orazem, P., Siphambe, H. (2014). *Botswana - Skills for competitiveness and economic growth (English)*. Washington, DC:
- World Bank Group. Retrieved from: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/594671468230641974/Botswana-Skills-for-competitiveness-and-economic-growth>.

- Gordon, H. R. (2008). *The history and growth of career and technical education in America*. Waveland Press, Inc. Long Grove, IL: USA.
- Hunt, K. S., (2003). Encouraging student involvement: An approach to teaching communication. *Communication Studies*, 54(2) 133-136. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510970309363275>.
- Husted, S. W., Mason, R. E. & Adams, E. (2003). *Cooperative Occupational Education: Including internships, apprenticeships and tech –prep*. Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: USA.
- Ivanova, A. & Moretti, A. (2018). Impact of Depth and Breadth of Student Involvement on Academic Achievement. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 55(2) 181- 195. DOI: [10.1080/19496591.2017.1358637](https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2017.1358637)
- Jotia, A. L., & Sithole, B. M., (2016). Pragmatizing democratic education in Botswana through business education: Countering the scourge of the diploma disease. *Cogent Education*
- Mannison, M. (1997). *Interactive teaching strategies in the Business Studies classroom*. Adelaide: Auslib Press.
- McNeal, R. (1995). Extracurricular Activities and High School Dropouts. *Sociology of Education*, 68(1), 62-80. doi:10.2307/2112764
- Mudariki, T., & Weeks, S. G. (1995). Vocationalisation of senior secondary education—a report for the Second National Commission on Education. *Gaborone, Botswana Educational Research Association*. [published in Volume Two of the NCE 1993 Report. in 1995, pages A12: 1-50].
- National Business Education Association (2008). *Effective methods of teaching business education*. Reston, VA. National Business Education Association.
- Nelson, E. L. (1981). Entrepreneurial initiatives at Federal Level. *Journal of Career Education*, 8(2), 93-100. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/089484538100800203>.
- Nwankwo, M. C. & Okoye, K. R. E. (2015). Influence of College Clubs in Increasing Students' Interest and Achievement in Nigerian Post-Primary Schools as Perceived by Science Students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(18) 184-193.
- Plank, S. (2001). *Career and technical education in the balance: An analysis of high school persistence, academic achievement, and postsecondary destinations*. St. Paul, MN: National Research Center for Career and Technical Education.

- Pittaway, L., Rodriguez-Falcon, E., Aiyegbayo, O. & King, A. (2010). The role of entrepreneurship clubs and societies in entrepreneurial learning. *International Small Business Journal*, 29(1) 37–57. DOI: 10.1177/0266242610369876.
- Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (1997). This we believe about the role of student organizations in business education. Reston, VA. National Business Education Association.
- Reed, W. D. & da Silva S. P. (2007). The relation between college student involvement and satisfaction. *Modern Psychological Studies*, 12(2), 21-33.
- Republic of Botswana, (1994). *Revised National Policy on Education*. Gaborone: Ministry of Education.
- Sithole, B. M. (2010). Pedagogical Practices of Business Studies Teachers in Botswana Junior Secondary Schools: Are Teachers and Curriculum Planners Singing from the Same Hymnbook? *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 3(1), 21-28.
- Smith, L. J., & Chenoweth, J. D. (2015). The contributions of student organization involvement to students' self-assessment of their leadership traits and relational behaviors. *American Journal of Business Education*, 8(4) 279-288.
- Steele, H. (2017). 12 best reasons to join a student organization. Retrieved from: <https://www.businessstudent.com/topics/12-best-reasons-to-join-a-student-organization/>
- Stone, J, R. & Aliaga, O. (2003). *Career and Technical Education, Career Pathways, and Work- Based Learning: Changes in Participation 1997-1999*. National Dissemination Center for Career and Technical Education.
- Tabulawa, R. (2013). *Teaching and learning in context: Why pedagogical reforms fail in Sub-Saharan Africa*. African Books Collective.
- The Foundation of Tomorrow (2018). The importance of clubs. Retrieved from: <https://thefoundationfortomorrow.org/the-importance-of-clubs/>
- Threton, M. D., & Pellock, C. (2008). The relationship between SkillsUSA student contest preparation and academics. *Association for Career and Technical Education Research (ACTER) Conference Proceedings*. Retrieved from ACTER website: <http://www.agri.wsu.edu/acter/publications/index.html>
- Threton, M. D., & Pellock, C. (2010). An Examination of the Relationship between SkillsUSA Student Contest Preparation and Academics. *Journal of Career and Technical Education*, 25(2), 94-108.

Weeks, S. (2002). Pre-vocational secondary education in Botswana: An historical and comparative perspective—1966 to 2002. *World Bank Review Report*.

World Bank Group (2017). *Job-ready graduates of Secondary education in Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia. Reforming instruction, assessment, and structure to Teach vocational and 21st century skills*. Washington, DC: USA

Zimmer, T. (2018). Importance of teamwork at work. Retrieved from <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-teamwork-work-11196.html>